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SYMPHONY OF A MEXICAN GARDEN

1. THE GARDEN *Poco sostenuto* in A major
The laving tide of inarticulate air.
Vivace in A major
The iris people dance.
2. THE POOL *Allegretto* in A minor
Cool-hearted dim familiar of the doves.
3. THE BIRDS *Presto* in F major
I keep a frequent tryst.
Presto meno assai
The blossom-powdered orange-tree.
4. TO THE MOON *Allegro con brio* in A major
Moon that shone on Babylon.

TO MOZART

*What junipers are these, inlaid
With flame of the pomegranate tree?
The god of gardens must have made
This still unrumored place for thee
To rest from immortality,
And dream within the splendid shade
Some more elusive symphony
Than orchestra has ever played.*

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

I In A major

Poco sostenuto

The laving tide of inarticulate air
Breaks here in flowers as the sea in foam,
But with no satin lisp of failing wave:
The odor-laden winds are very still.
An unimagined music here exhales
In upcurled petal, dreamy bud half-furled,
And variations of thin vivid leaf:
Symphonic beauty that some god forgot.
If form could waken into lyric sound,
This flock of irises like poisoning birds
Would feel song at their slender feathered throats,
And pour into a grey-winged aria
Their wrinkled silver fingermarked with pearl;
That flight of ivory roses high along
The airy azure of the larkspur spires
Would be a fugue to puzzle nightingales
With too-evasive rapture, phrase on phrase.
Where the hibiscus flares would cymbals clash,
And the black cypress like a deep bassoon
Would hum a clouded amber melody.

But all across the trudging ragged chords
That are the tangled grasses in the heat,
The mariposa lilies fluttering
Like trills upon some archangelic flute,

Symphony of a Mexican Garden

The roses and carnations and divine
Small violets that voice the vanished god,
There is a lure of passion-poignant tone
Not flower-of-pomegranate—that finds the heart
As stubborn oboes do—can breathe in air,
Nor poppies, nor keen lime, nor orange-bloom.

What zone of wonder in the ardent dusk
Of trees that yearn and cannot understand,
Vibrates as to the golden shepherd horn
That stirs some great adagio with its cry
And will not let it rest?

O tender trees,
Your orchid, like a shepherdess of dreams,
Calls home her whitest dream from following
Elusive laughter of the unmindful god!

Vivace

The iris people dance
Like any nimble faun:
To rhythmic radiance
They foot it in the dawn.
They dance and have no need
Of crystal-dripping flute
Or chuckling river-reed,—
Their music hovers mute.
The dawn-lights flutter by
All noiseless, but they know!

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Such children of the sky
Can hear the darkness go.
But does the morning play
Whatever they demand—
Or amber-barred bourrée
Or silver saraband?

THE POOL

II. In A minor

Allegretto

Cool-hearted dim familiar of the doves,
Thou coiled sweet water where they come to tell
Their mellow legends and rehearse their loves,
As what in April or in June befell
And thou must hear of,—friend of Dryades
Who lean to see where flower should be set
To star the dusk of wreathed ivy braids,
They have not left thy trees,
Nor do tired fauns thy crystal kiss forget,
Nor forest-nymphs astray from distant glades.

Thou feelest with delight their showery feet
Along thy mossy margin myrtle-starred,
And thine the heart of wildness quick to beat
At imprint of shy hoof upon thy sward:

Symphony of a Mexican Garden

Yet who could know thee wild who art so cool,
So heavenly-minded, templed in thy grove
Of plummy cedar, larch and juniper?
O strange ecstatic Pool,
What unknown country art thou dreaming of,
Or temple than this garden lovelier?

Who made thy sky the silver side of leaves,
And poised its orchid like a swan-white moon
Whose disc of perfect pallor half deceives
The mirror of thy limpid green lagoon,
He loveth well thy ripple-feathered moods,
Thy whims at dusk, thy rainbow look at dawn!
Dream thou no more of vales Olympian:
Where pale Olympus broods
There were no orchid white as moon or swan,
No sky of leaves, no garden-haunting Pan!

THE BIRDS

III In F major

Presto

I keep a frequent tryst
With whirr and shower of wings:
Some inward melodist
Interpreting all things
Appoints the place, the hours.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Dazzle and sense of flowers,
Though not the least leaf stir,
May mean a tanager:
How rich the silence is until he sings!

The smoke-tree's cloudy white
Has fire within its breast.
What winged mere delight
There hides as in a nest
And fashions of its flame
Music without a name?
So might an opal sing
If given thrilling wing,
And voice for lyric wildness unexpressed.

In grassy dimness thatched
With tangled growing things,
A troubadour rose-patched,
With velvet-shadowed wings,
Seeks a sustaining fly.
Who else unseen goes by
Quick-pattering through the hush?
Some twilight-footed thrush
Or finch intent on small adventurings?

I have no time for gloom,
For gloom what time have I?
The orange is in bloom;
Emerald parrots fly

Symphony of a Mexican Garden

Out of the cypress-dusk;
Morning is strange with musk.
The wild canary now
Jewels the lemon-bough,
And mocking-birds laugh in the rose's room.

THE ORANGE TREE

In D Major

Presto meno assai

The blossom-powdered orange tree,
For all her royal speechlessness,
Out of a heart of ecstasy
Is singing, singing, none the less!
Light as a springing fountain, she
Is spray above the wind-sleek turf:
Dream-daughter of the moon's white sea
And sister to its showered surt!

TO THE MOON

IV In A major

Allegro con brio

Moon that shone on Babylon,
Searching out the gardens there,
Could you find a fairer one
Than this garden, anywhere?
Did Damascus at her best
Hide such beauty in her breast?

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

When you flood with creamy light
Vines that net the sombre pine,
Turn the shadowed iris white,
Summon cactus stars to shine,
Do you free in silvered air
Wistful spirits everywhere?

Here they linger, there they pass,
And forget their native heaven:
Flit along the dewy grass
Rare Vittoria, Sappho, even!
And the hushed magnolia burns
Incense in her gleaming urns.

When the nightingale demands
Word with Keats who answers him,
Shakespeare listens—understands—
Mindful of the cherubim;
And the South Wind dreads to know
Mozart gone as seraphs go.

Moon of poets dead and gone,
Moon to gods of music dear,
Gardens they have looked upon
Let them re-discover here:
Rest—and dream a little space
Of some heart-remembered place!

Grace Hazard Conkling